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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Education Department Releases Regents' Commended Schools, District Classifications**

The third annual list of Regents' Commended Schools, released today by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education and the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), honors 44 schools in 22 school districts plus a state-operated school. Last year only 17 schools were named Regents' Commended Schools.

Regents' Commended Schools are recognized for making significant progress in both English language arts and mathematics for two consecutive years. The schools will be honored later in the school year with a ceremony at the State House.

RIDE also released today its annual list of district classifications, which shows only 4 (of 36) school districts classified as "in need of improvement." Last year, 11 districts were classified as in need of improvement.

As required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, districts, like schools, must meet annual targets for the district as a whole and for eight groups of students within the district: African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, Whites, students in living in poverty, English-language learners, and students with disabilities.

The list of Regents' Commended Schools and District Classifications are posted on the RIDE Web site, [www.rido.net](http://www.rido.net), see under "2004 School, District, State Report Cards."

"Last month, I was pleased to announce dramatic, across-the-board improvements on Rhode Island's 2004 School-Performance Classification," Governor Donald L. Carcieri said as the lists were released. "These gains demonstrate that Rhode Island is effectively meeting the challenge posed by the federal No Child Left Behind Act."

"This year's district classifications also show that we must continue to strive to ensure that every Rhode Island child gets a good education," Carcieri continued. "Last year, I authorized an extra \$1 million to support secondary schools in our more troubled districts. We will continue to do everything possible to add to our recent successes."

"I am delighted that so many of our schools have been making progress not just for one year but over an extended period of time," said James A. DiPrete, chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "These 44 Regents' Commended Schools are leading the way as our schools move toward high levels of achievement for all students."

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Peter McWalters, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, noted that eight districts that missed targets last year met their required targets in 2004.

“This shows that when districts and schools strive toward a high standard, the goals are attainable,” McWalters said. “We’re all aware, however, that the annual targets will be steadily rising over the next ten years. In fact, the target scores that all schools and districts must attain will be raised in 2005, posing an even greater challenge to all.”

The district classifications are similar to the school classifications released last month. Districts are classified as “in need of improvement” if *either* of these two conditions are met:

- A. At least 40% of the schools are classified as making “insufficient progress,” or
- B. The district’s students in at least two levels (elementary, middle, high school) are classified as making “insufficient progress”

Once a district is classified as “in need of improvement” for two years, it becomes part of the process of “progressive support and intervention,” which is established by both federal and state law. The actions that the department takes during this process may vary, depending in part on how long the district has been in “intervention status.” Note that districts are classified only if they are in need of improvement; other districts receive no classification.

RIDE has posted all of the 2004 School, District, and State Report cards on the RIDE Web site. By clicking “2004 School, District, State Report Cards” on the right-hand menu, you can access all of these report cards as well as background information on how the school and district classifications were determined.

The cards have been distributed to all superintendents; the school districts will soon begin the process of distributing the cards to all members of the school communities, as required by federal law.

Web documents:

[District Classifications - 2004](#)

[Regents' Commended Schools - 2004](#)

